

City Council

Study Session Summary

**August 13, 2019
Library Meeting Room
951 Spruce Street
7:00 PM**

Mayor Muckle called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

City Council Present: Mayor Bob Muckle
Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Lipton
Council member Jay Keany
Council member Chris Leh
Council member Susan Loo
Council member Dennis Maloney
Council member Ashley Stolzmann

Staff Present: Heather Balser, City Manager
Stan Zemler, Interim Economic Development Director
Megan Davis, Intergovernmental Affairs Director
Kathleen Hix, Human Resources Director
Paula Knapek, Senior Human Resources Specialist
Rob Zuccaro, Director of Planning and Building Safety

Discussion – Economic Development Program

City Manager Balser and Interim Economic Development Director Stan Zemler introduced the discussion. They outlined the need for Council input on the city's economic development program and the possibility of plan or strategy to guide the work of the City to maintain economic vitality.

Interim Director Zemler conducted a brief SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis with City Council. Council input could reflect the perspective of influencer, policy maker, business person, visitor, developer, or any other perspective that they would like to share. City Council generated ideas about the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities regarding our local economy.

SWOT input shared by Council:

Strengths:

- Geographic location close to Boulder (first stop out of Boulder)
 - Sales tax revenue from people who don't live here, are working here or passing through
 - Accessibility to CU, Federal labs, Denver

- Transportation connections (to Boulder, Denver, Airport)
- Visitors
- Family income – residential income
- Education (educated population)
- Historic downtown
- Designated areas for primary employers and retailers
- Great industrial park
- Undeveloped land (Storage Teck and Centennial Valley)
- Redevelopment opportunities
- Good infrastructure
- Reasonable tax structure, development/fee structure
- Outdoor opportunities, parks and open space
- Proximity to the mountains
- Strong City services
- Diverse Council perspective
- Good schools
- Medical care/hospitals
- Engaged citizenry
- Strong city organization
- Healthy population
- Safe community
- Small town character, small community vibe
- Aging population

Weaknesses: (Economy)

- Low population (potentially) in the trade market – not a growing residential population
- Traffic counts (low traffic counts) – not enough population density for some kinds of businesses
- Opportunities for new development limited because we're not built out
- Housing crisis (housing costs too high)
- Hard to attract entry level employees
- Aging population
- Lack of access to alternative transit – bus access
- First/last mile
- Land and rent costs are high – high cost of commercial property
- Increasing local economy – less of regional market than previously
- City's heavy reliance on sales tax – lack of diverse tax base
- Poor cell phone service (business issue, health and safety issue, etc.)

Threats:

- City's heavy reliance on sales tax
- Increasing competitiveness from other communities for other retail – more competition
- Neighboring community BAP programs and incentives are more aggressive than ours
 - Businesses being lured by other communities
- Perceived (by businesses) barriers to business activity (by the City) – e.g. idea about concept plans, sandwich board signs, etc.
- Online sales
- Complacency by residents related to issues/needs (e.g. people don't know that main street is fragile)
- National and international economy – immigration, taxes, workforce,
- Climate change – hail, ozone, other weather related climate threats
- Regional growth impacts -
 - Transportation corridor functionality – regional traffic impacts
 - External funding of our transportation needs
 - Growth happening along the I-25 corridor is cannibalizing all the new business. The growth is happening there, so that's where the businesses are going.
 - Center of the region is moving east (northeast) and we are closer to the west.
- Increased expectations of citizens without corresponding increase in taxes
- Jobs/housing imbalance – not enough housing at affordable prices and increase in jobs
 - Cost of residential rental market has increased (significant as compared to neighbors)
- Proximity to Boulder (because of the lack of housing and so many jobs – people live in Louisville)
- Impacts from neighboring communities
- Leakage of sales tax dollars to other communities – retail, businesses, etc. (not having the goods that people are looking for)
- Risk of losing large retailers – Lowes, Kohls, etc.
- Diversity of housing stock – does the mix of housing (rental vs. purchase), multi-family vs. single family, etc.)
- Out of town/state property owners (retail/commercial)

Opportunities:

- Defining our goals. We need to define what we really want to do. Do we want to fill vacant spaces? Are these fundamentals that we all agree on?
- Locations of opportunities that the City could focus on:
 - Conoco Phillips
 - Centennial value

- Sam's Club (Parcel O)
- (Don't just fill the spaces – actually be purposeful with what will help the City financially)
- Leverage this opportunity to rethink the use of the spaces.
- Increasing cost of doing business in Boulder
 - Lack of affordable space
- Increasing traffic in Boulder
- Growth of rooftops in Superior
- TMP
 - Chance to make it easier to get here – customers and employees
 - Connectivity of parts of our City through transportation amenities, and other amenities. (Through the TMP)
- Change the perception of businesses so that they believe the City is a partner, more business friendly, etc.
- Better leverage and use the City's brand
- Can control our environment/city limits more than other places
- CTC businesses – daytime employees that come into CTC and never actually go to downtown. Opportunity to inform them about Louisville.

After the SWOT analysis, Council discussed what they would like to see from an economic vitality strategy, and what additional information is necessary to be able to develop goals and strategies around economic activities. Council members indicated that the data available through the McCaslin/Parcel O study and the City of Boulder retail study is reflective of the current economic conditions in Louisville. However, additional information was requested including more citizen data about economic needs/desires, ongoing business data, sales tax data by sector in specific geographic areas, what are effective strategies and what are not (that other cities are doing and that we are doing) and other analysis about the city's current and projected economic position.

Council discussed waiting until the new Council comes on board in November before starting a study, or starting the work now and then incoming members continuing to move it forward. Some Council members stated that this conversation is critical and this has been a priority for some time. Getting a collective vision on Council about economic development is necessary. Finding common ground around what we need is important and should be able to do this with current and future councils alike.

Council discussed the differences between goals and strategies/tactics around economic development. Council members stated that there is generally a shared understanding of the needs, but may not be shared goals for what they want to accomplish or strategies for how to address the needs.

Council would like to have a discussion about goals, but is unsure how that conversation should be facilitated. We need to consider what our tax structure is, and how that impacts our economy and our economic needs as a community (and to meet community needs as a city). Some additional analysis would help provide direction around where to direct City resources. Then develop goals around those areas.

Council consensus is to take the next steps to develop goals and move forward a process that would inform and result in an economic vitality plan for the city. Staff will provide a proposal for next steps in developing goals that Council can consider at a future meeting.

Council requested information in the subsequent discussion around economic vitality goals:

- McCaslin small area plan and SBR small area plan citizen data/survey information at the next meeting.
- Annual sales tax reports.

City Manager's Update

City Manager had no news or updates to share at this time.

Advanced Agenda

Council made suggested changes to the advanced agenda, and provided information about anticipated absences for future meetings.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Submitted 8/14/19 by Megan Davis